1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11
NAMNAM

793 562 *Woman Ten'dan'*: 'A woman might become a *Ten'dan'*. She has the right to offer sacrifices, and receive lost things. She sits down saying: "Land receive your water and all your things". After she has said so, a man cuts the throat of the offering. She has a calabash, not a string hat. She owns the land and can stop wars with the corn stalk.' (A female *Ten'dan'* is interviewed later.)

791 *Rain-makers*: 'A rain-maker is separate from a *Ten'dan'*. He is called *Sa-ran*. We have none here.'

793 764 *Ten'dan' and Funeral Customs*: 'The family of the deceased would "reach" the *Ten'dan'* and he would give them a place to make a grave; were he to refuse they could not bury him. The *Ten'dan'* would send the boy to mark out the grave, making a circle with a calabash and the pointed stick used for digging the grave. He will say:

'*Dakirig* (a grove) some one is dead, can I refuse to bury him, therefore may you hear, and let the "room" be a proper one that he may sleep well?' A sheep is then sacrificed near the grave.

764 *Graves*: The Namnam bury their dead outside, not in, the compound. As many as twenty corpses may be in one grave. Men and women are buried in the same grave. The graves are circular with a bottle-neck. A boy or girl who has not any *nyere*[1] must have a separate grave.

834 A man does not have sexual intercourse with his wife for three years after she bears a child, i.e. if the child lives.

793 *Female Ten'dan'* (*Ten'dan' poka*): Akayiri, a female *Ten'dan'*, who may be seen in Fig. 81, told me the following:

'My ancestress was a *Ten'dan' poka* (a female *Ten'dan'*), called Banams. My grove is called Tinkyena; it is always a female *Ten'dan'* who is in charge of it. The calabash, which the little girl who always accompanies me carries, and my uncut hair, are the signs of my office. I own the land at Zoga. If the Zoga men want to fight, I will go between them, and place a corn stalk on the ground. Zoga has two *Ten'dan'*, a male and a female, but I own the land, as is proved by the fact that mine is the hind leg of all sacrifices; the male only gets a fore-leg. Because "a female may kill a snake, but only a male cut off its head" (*poka ka kure wafo nwa zugo*), therefore, when I have given the sacrifice, the male cuts its throat. This male has no hat or skin. When I say that the land at Zogo belongs to me, I mean it belongs to the spirits. I am their servant. A male *Ten'dan'* may have a wife, but a

[1] See p. 8. This only applies to a child whose mother is still young enough to bear children. [Nyere is a term applied to two children born consecutively of the same parents —Analyst.]

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11
Kusase

deceased's senior wife (the eldest son's maternal uncle) because a man's senior wife owns the compound and has all the work of building it up. During a man's lifetime, the eldest son may not look into his father's bag or into his grain-store, or make use of anything personally used by his father.'[1]

Widows and Children: 'Widows go to the heir, but if he does not want them, they will know this, and already have spoken to the men whom they wish to marry. Before their heads have been shaved, they must not on any account have sexual intercourse with any one. Any man who is guilty of doing so, is said "to have cut the widows' strings" (*okoa pɔkɔ nwis*) and any infant whom such an adulterer looks upon will die. These widows' strings are made by an old woman who has ceased to bear children, and, after the funeral custom, she will cut them. After this they will appear in fresh leaves and people will know they are eligible to remarry. They will marry a clansman, not some one from another town. A son may not marry any of his father's widows if the father has ever had sexual intercourse with them. The deceased's brother, if not a *nyere*, may do so. The leaves which widows wear are *tanpiba* leaves (shea butter leaves). If a wife ever puts these on (during his lifetime) her husband will divorce her, and claim back the cows.[2]

'If the widow goes outside the clan of the late husband to marry, the heir will claim from her parents the cows paid, but deducting one cow for each child borne by her. Her father in turn will recover these cows from the man whom she then marries. The children then remain with the late husband's family. Should all the cows not have been paid when the first husband died, the heir, or whichever of the clansmen take her, have to pay the balance due, otherwise no new payments are necessary. It is taboo for the heir to take for himself two widows of the same man. He chooses which he will have and gives the other to his brother, that is, if these persons want them, otherwise they may marry a clansman.' Other customs in connexion with widows and the funeral custom will be dealt with under that heading.

Children: 'The children of the deceased belong to his fellow clansman who marries the widow, but across the Volta, among the Kusase whom we call the people of the West (*Toondem*), children of widows belong to the ghost (i.e. the late husband). If the widow marries outside her late husband's clan, any children she had by her first husband remain the property of his clansman, i.e. of the heir.'

[1] Compare the Nankanse.

[2] Compare Nankanse custom.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

CHAPTER IX

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE CLAN ORGANIZATION

The Concept of a Clanswoman

We have occasionally referred to the role of women in the clan organization of the Tallensi, but this subject deserves further consideration. In a certain sense women illustrate the principle of the corporate unity and identity of lineage and clan more strikingly than men. On marriage women leave their paternal settlements to reside with their husbands. They never, however, lose their status as members of their own patrilineal lineage and clan. It is true that they have not the same jural rights and duties as their clan brothers and cannot exercise a responsible role in lineage or clan ritual; for, as we shall see in the second part of this study,[1] a woman is a minor in jural and ritual matters. Nevertheless, women are subject to the critical norms of clanship in the same way as men. They are bound by the same rules of exogamy as the men, and by the same ritual observances that distinguish maximal lineage from maximal lineage or clan from clan. They also have certain privileges as members of their patrilineal descent group. We deal with these points in outline here. The details will come more appropriately in our next volume.

The term *pɔɣayabələg* sums up the status of a woman as a member of her patrilineal maximal lineage and clan. It can best be translated as 'woman of the clan'; and it refers to a woman of the clan or maximal lineage whether she is residing at her father's house or living with her husband. *Pɔɣayabələg* denotes the general status of clanswoman irrespective of what segment of the clan she may belong to. At all funeral ceremonies, for instance, certain duties and tasks both of a ritual and non-ritual kind fall on *pɔɣayabəlis*. Some of these tasks, such as the gathering of firewood, are usually performed by young unmarried *pɔɣayabəlis*. The girls who volunteer for these tasks are treated as a single group, irrespective of what segment of the clan they belong to. Other tasks and ritual duties that have to be carried out by clanswomen fall upon older women, usually married women who return home specially for the funeral. Any woman of the clan who is qualified by her knowledge and seniority can perform these duties. If a married woman living with her husband is asked where she comes from, she always replies: 'I am a *pɔɣayabələg* of such-and-such a clan.'

It is a maxim that all *pɔɣayabəlis* are equal to one another in relation to their natal clan. 'No one owns a *pɔɣayabələg*, we all own her (*sɔ pu so pɔɣayabələg, ti waabi nso ka*)', is the native formula. The implication is that the clan as a whole is the primary unit claiming the allegiance of a

[1] Forthcoming shortly under the title of *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*.

562 618x [591]
[p. 147]

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

562 ×618 *pɔyayabələg*, particularly of one who is living at her husband's house. To be sure, her kinship ties with her own family and with the segment of the maximal lineage to which her father belongs are not severed; indeed, a woman's relations with her paternal clan are largely regulated and mediated by these ties. The concept of *pɔyayabələg* implicitly stresses the fact that it is a woman's fate to be married out of the clan and to be cut off from its routine corporate activity; and it contains the idea that a woman thus separated from her parental home is felt to belong primarily to the widest corporate unit that stands in contraposition to her husband's, where his relations with her are concerned.

Thus outside the range of the lineage segment in which generation differences are recognized, a *pɔyayabələg* is referred to as 'our sister (*ti tau*)' by any of her clansmen, and she speaks of them as *ntap*, 'my brothers'. A man visiting the settlement of another clan makes himself at home in the rooms of any *pɔyayabələg* of his clan. When the cow-peas are ripening, a *pɔyayabələg* visiting her clan settlement—her 'father's house' (*ba yiri*), as it is described by extension of the concept of the father's house or lineage in the narrowest sense—may pluck cow-pea leaves (*bɛyət*) for herself anywhere in the settlement. A Yaməlag or Sie *pɔyayabələg* can do this at Tongo, for instance, if she is merely passing [578] through on her way elsewhere. No one would resent it; but if the wife of a member of a segment of the clan other than his own were to pluck a man's cow-pea leaves without his express permission, it would lead to a quarrel. Similarly, it is customary for women to come and collect a basket of grain from the men of their parental family after the harvest. A *pɔyayabələg*, however, is permitted to ask any of her clansmen for a gift of this kind. Thus it sometimes happens that a Yaməlag or Sie woman married to a man at Yinduuri comes to a clansman at Tongo after the harvest for a gift of grain, or a Tongo woman married to a man at Datɔk or Duusi calls on a clansman at Sie for such a gift. As these examples indicate, a *pɔyayabələg* of a linked maximal lineage counts as a *pɔyayabələg* of the clan.

562 764 When a woman's funeral is celebrated by her husband's people the last act is 'to send her home (*kulh*)' to her father's house. For this ceremony a large party of men and women in their gayest clothes, led by the nearest agnates of the dead woman and escorted by drummers and musicians, sets out for her husband's settlement to 'receive her funeral (*die koor*)'. When such a party is being assembled, messages are sent to the heads of all the constituent lineages of the clan, and representatives are generally sent from all the lineages to accompany the party. It is partly a matter of duty, and partly an act of courtesy and a voluntary demonstration of clan solidarity. Sometimes young people of linked lineages join the party, knowing that it will be lavishly entertained by the affinal clan and that there will be dancing and girls to flirt with. Fetching the funeral of a *pɔyayabələg* is an affair of the whole clan.

562 613 The *pɔyayabələg* has a formal status in the lineage and clan, and this status is recognized as an intrinsic element in the structure of the lineage and clan. The fiction behind this is the idea often explicitly stated by the natives that but for an accident of birth she might have been a man

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

and her sons might have been able to exercise all the rights and duties of clanship. There is, in fact, a submerged feeling of rivalry in the relations between the men of the clan and the *pɔyayabəlis*, deprived by an accident of birth of effective jural and ritual membership of the clan. This is shown, for example, in a curious taboo affecting the oldest living *pɔyayabəlɔg* of a maximal lineage. She may never spend a night in the homestead of the head of the maximal lineage, even if he is her own brother. If she did, either or both of them would die. For the lineage ancestors abide in this homestead, and they object to her presence there simultaneously with that of their proper male custodian. The natives, of course, simply state this taboo as a fact, but to anyone familiar with Tale culture the interpretation is obvious. The senior *pɔyayabəlɔg* might, in her own person, have been the head of the lineage but for the accident of birth. Her presence in the homestead which she might have occupied as a man is a hidden challenge and reproach both to the male head of the lineage and to the ancestors. It would be tantamount to a symbolic rejection of the fundamental principles of the lineage organization. For these reasons she cannot stay with the man who most conspicuously represents the extrusion of women from the full heritage of patrilineal descent.

Institutionalized Recognition of a Clanswoman's Status

There are many institutions in which the status of the *pɔyayabəlɔg* as an intrinsic element in the lineage organization is recognized. For example, a new-born child is confined to its father's house for some months. When it is big enough to be allowed out of doors it must be ritually taken out for the first time by a *pɔyayabəlɔg* of the clan. Usually she is a near agnate of the father, but any clanswoman may be asked to carry out the rite. The child's father consults a diviner to find out who will be a suitable *pɔyayabəlɔg*; for the rite is implicitly a blessing of the ancestors, and it is they who are believed to appoint a woman of the clan to carry their blessing to the child. It can be surmised that a *pɔyayabəlɔg* is chosen for this rite because she is by birth identified with the child's father and its lineage, and by sex identified with the child's mother and the function of motherhood. Taking the child out of the house is in part a question of maternal care, therefore a woman's task; it is also a step that involves the child's physical and spiritual well-being. Outside the walls of the homestead lie greater dangers, both material and mystical, than inside the homestead, and this is the concern of the child's patrilineal ancestors.

The role of *pɔyayabəlis* in relation to the lineage *bɔyar* is significant in this connexion. A woman cannot become the custodian of an ancestor shrine, except nominally if she is the sole survivor of a lineage. In that case she cannot sacrifice to the shrine directly, but must call in a collateral male agnate to deputize for the man who might have been the custodian of the shrine. This is the most important distinction between the status of male members and that of female members of the lineage, and it is a consequence of the fact that women do not help to maintain the continuity of the lineage. Nevertheless, *pɔyayabəlis* have the right to take part

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

562 in sacrifices to their lineage ancestors. When an important sacrifice is
793 due to be made to a lineage *bɔyar*, the married *pɔyayabɔlis* of the lineage
769 who live near enough to be able to attend, and especially the senior *pɔyayabɔlɔg*, must be informed. Those who can, will attend the rite, and a prescribed portion (*tɔrɔg*) of the animal sacrificed is the due of the *pɔyayabɔlis*. This portion, consisting of the 'waist' (*sie*), i.e. part of the vertebral column and some of the ribs, together with prescribed bits of various internal organs and the intestines, is divided among the *pɔyayabɔlis*, both married and unmarried, who are present. The allocation of a prescribed portion of a sacrificial animal to any group or individual is the most significant indication, in Tale culture, that that group or individual has a recognized formal status in the social structure.

428 An outstanding event in the life of a lineage is the inheritance (*vaagɔr*),
613 that is, the formal assumption of the custody, of a lineage *bɔyar* by a new
796 lineage head. Being old men generally, lineage heads seldom survive succession to this status for many years. Thus, the inheritance of a lineage *bɔyar* is an event of fairly frequent recurrence at periods varying
[182] from five to ten years. It is an occasion on which the integration of the lineage is at its maximum. Every member, male and female, who can do so makes an effort to attend. Those who are heads of families contribute fowls and flour to be added to the sacrifices on their behalf. All cognates by descent through women of the lineage who live near enough are invited, and those who are heads of families also bring contributions for the sacrifice. In short, the occasion is a sacrament in which all the descendants of the lineage ancestors, through both men and women, participate, and it is regarded as a particularly auspicious sacrament.

613 One of the first rites in the inheritance of a lineage *bɔyar* is the transfer
796 of the shrine from the homestead of its late custodian to that of his succes-
[787] sor. This rite is carried out by one male member of the lineage, almost invariably a member of the segment whose head has become head of the
562 lineage, and one *pɔyayabɔlɔg* of the lineage, both selected by divination. Later, when many fowls brought by those present are sacrificed to the *bɔyar* to mark its transfer to a new lineage head, this pair are the first of the lineage members to present their offerings. Thus is symbolized the equality of status of men and women members of the lineage before the *bɔyar*, and the rights of women members and their descendants to the spiritual protection of the lineage ancestors.

604 As we have seen in our consideration of attached lineages, and as
x618 we shall learn more fully when we examine the relations of maternal
587 uncle and sororal nephew,[1] there are circumstances in which descent through a woman is partially assimilated to the true agnatic line. To give only one example here, a sororal nephew (*ahɔŋ*) of any degree whatsoever, that is, any member of another clan who has a cognatic link with the clan in question through an ancestress however remote, is formally equated with the sons of the clan in the matter of leviratic rights. An *ahɔŋ* has the right to seek the hand of a widow of his maternal uncle's clan (*ahɔb yiri*) on the same terms as a true member of that clan. He is, so to speak, exercising the right, corollary to the obligation of clan exogamy, that

[1] In *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

might have been his mother's if she were a man. In practice sororal nephews are rarely allowed to assert this right, and then only if their cognatic link with their maternal uncle's clan is not more than about four generations back.

Though the *pɔyayabɔlis* of a lineage or clan never act together as a single group, since marriage disperses them among other clans, they are often thought of as forming a united body, the feminine counterpart of the men of the clan. This is seen most conspicuously in funeral ceremonies; and we can easily understand why, if we remember that funeral ceremonies are the concern of the whole clan. We have made a passing reference to the role of *pɔyayabɔlis* in funeral ceremonies, but it deserves some amplification. For it is in funeral ceremonies that one constantly hears 'the *pɔyayabɔlis*' spoken of as if they were a regular, organized group, sees them called upon to undertake tasks in a purely representative capacity, and observes the allocation of prescribed portions of food to them as of right.

Naturally, this is most noticeable at the funeral of an important member of the lineage or the wife of a lineage elder. Large quantities of beer and food have to be prepared for distribution at various times during the ceremony, and this is the work of the women. All the women assisting in the work at the 'house of the funeral' (*koor yiri*) are divided into two groups, in a way which shows clearly the division of the women in whom a lineage or clan has jural and moral interests, into those who belong to the clan by birth and those who are married into it. The *pɔyayabɔlis* form one group. They have separate cooking quarters, and special tasks. The other group consists of the *dubɛnib*, 'those who stay in the room'. They are the clanswomen of the wives of the bereaved house, who are themselves wives of other members of the clan or of nearby linked lineages or allied clans. They may include the *pɔyayabɔlis* of several clans, except, of course, those of the clan celebrating the funeral. They, too, have their own cooking quarters and special duties and privileges. They are called *dubɛnib* (from *dug*, room, and *bɛ*, to stay or be) because they are identified with the *dugdɛm*, the 'mistresses of the rooms', that is, the wives of the bereaved clan who are their clan sisters. Their principal task is to remain indoors with their clan sisters in order to attend to their needs, to console them, and to help them in the duties that would fall upon wives in this situation. Clan sisterhood sometimes has a very wide connotation in these circumstances. There are many Wakii women married to Tongo men. If one of them requires the help of her clan sisters as *dubɛnib*, those of them who live nearest to her or are most closely related to her will be the first to come, and her distant clan sisters will probably not come at all. On the other hand, there are very few women of Hill Talis clans married to men at Duusi. So if one of them needs the help of *dubɛnib* she will call on all the women of Hill Talis clans at Duusi and in neighbouring settlements. In such a case the solidarity of clanship merges with that of locality and of common values. This principle is carried so far that if a Gore woman married to a Tenzugu man requires the help of *dubɛnib*, she calls upon all the other Gore wives, of whom there are very few, of Tenzugu and of immediately adjacent clans, whatever part of Goreland

2: Fortes · E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

they may come from. For these women feel themselves to be as closely akin to one another as members of the same clan, by contraposition with the Tallensi whom they have married.

The *pɔyayabəlis* act together as a single group under the leadership of the oldest among them at funeral ceremonies. The young girls perform such tasks as bringing in the great bundles of firewood required for cooking the beer. The older *pɔyayabəlis*, expert in the preparation of beer, undertake that task themselves. The younger women do the more strenuous jobs connected with cooking, such as grinding flour and preparing the other ingredients of a meal. The older women cook the porridge and meat relishes required for such rites as the setting out of consecrated food for the dead. All food required for ritual use is prepared by the *pɔyayabəlis*, since all the ritual is the preserve of the clan. As members of the clan they can be associated with the ritual activities of the clan, and as women they can carry out tasks which are appropriate to their sex in accordance with the usual division of labour. The *dubɛnib* do not prepare the food required for ritual purposes, but only the food used to give hospitality to clansmen, kinsmen, and other visitors.

The *pɔyayabəlis* have also to be directly represented by one of them, most appropriately by one of the older women, in many of the rites. A *pɔyayabəlɔg* has to assist in such rites as the offering of the initial sacrifices to the spirit of the departed and to the ancestors he or she is about to join. A *pɔyayabəlɔg* and a man of the clan see to the ritual feeding of the orphans, which takes place at different stages of the ceremonies. The various mourning strings (*miis*) which the orphans and widows have to wear during the funeral ceremonies are tied on, and at the end removed, by an elderly *pɔyayabəlɔg*. The setting out of consecrated food for the dead is always done by one male and one female member of the clan. And then, when the final divination takes place, a man and a woman of the lineage together carry out the simple rite of restoring the dead person's body dirt (*dayat*), the symbol of his individual self, to the house where his life was spent, and whither he now returns as a spirit to whom sacrifice must be offered.

Lastly, a married *pɔyayabəlɔg* is a link between her paternal clan and her husband's clan, both in herself and in the line of descent which springs from her. This is evident nowadays from the role of the *pɔyasama* —a clansman of the bridegroom and a matrilateral kinsman of the bride's lineage—as an intermediary in marriage negotiations. It was shown in former days in peace-making ceremonies. If two clans, or groups of clans, had been at war, peace was concluded by a ritual reconciliation. In this the opponents were usually represented by a *pɔyayabəlɔg* of each side who was married to a member of the other side, who was therefore bound by jural and moral ties to both sides and had strong emotional attachments to both, and thus symbolized the underlying interdependence of the opponents.

Lineage and clan consist of both their male and their female members. Though the women do not contribute to the continuity and perpetuation of the lineage, they are a source of strength to it. This is most obvious in the fact that the bride-price paid for them adds to the resources by

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

means of which the lineage acquires wives. But what is more important, the women carry the descent of the clan into other clans, and thus build up that network of interclan kinship ties which breaks down the rigid exclusiveness of the lineage and clan, interweaves clan with clan, and is one of the factors that restrain strife between clans and prevent Tale society from splitting into anarchic fragments. Since the tie of descent is indestructible, women members of the lineage and clan have definite rights and duties in all those practical and ritual institutions which bring out most precisely the solidarity and corporate identity of the lineage through the passage of time and the mutability of generations.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

family head, she does so as a privileged spectator. She has this privilege because her welfare is bound up with that of her husband and children, and theirs with hers. She remains outside the religious and moral solidarity of her husband's clan and maximal lineage, and, indeed, has only a contingent interest in the solidarity of his minimal lineage. It is noteworthy that women, both daughters and wives, are excluded from the esoteric ritual activities in which the moral sanctions of the unity and continuity of lineage and clan are embodied. In religious, jural, and political matters—all of which are closely interconnected—Tale women have the status of minors. This exclusion is most stringent in the case of the Earth cult and the cult of the lineage *bɔŋar*. But the segregation is not so rigid as to keep women in entire ignorance of or wholly disinterested in these male monopolies. Their welfare depends upon the propitious outcome of these activities as much as that of their menfolk. They see, hear, and discuss among themselves and with their menfolk ritual affairs and jural actions that concern their husbands' lineages of which, indeed, wives and children often form the main subject. They grind the flour, brew the beer, and witness the preparations for esoteric religious rites. They see the public and semi-public phases of big religious ceremonies and overhear the endless consultations and discussions between the men which these ceremonies always produce.

A wife, therefore, can be in sympathy with the interests and can respect the values that rule the actions of her husband and her sons as members of their agnatic descent group, while being herself excluded from an effective public role in relation to them. But a cleavage remains. Thus in a conflict between her husband's clan and her father's clan she might very well take the side of the latter, not openly, it is true, but covertly. How strongly the natives feel this was shown at the divination ceremony following the death of Siiyɛlib of Təŋ-Seug. This divination was so cryptic and involved that I could make no sense of it. Fortunately I was able to get an explanation from one of my most trustworthy informants, a close agnate of the dead man. Siiyɛlib's death, it appeared, was a mystical retribution for a grave sin he had committed many years before. He had been one of the instigators of the white man's attack on the Hill Talis, and was an accessory, therefore, to the slaughter of many men. Now there were several Talis present at the funeral—kinsmen, affines, and, last but not least, wives of the dead man and his close agnates. If Siiyɛlib's sin were publicly brought out in the divination it would stir up all their hostile feelings. They would feel resentful towards Siiyɛlib's surviving agnates on account of his complicity in the destruction of their fathers and grandfathers. And this would produce strife between the men of Seug and their Talis wives, their Talis cognates, and their Talis affines.

The social and psychological cleavage which underlies all the relations of husband and wife is the structural kernel around which the

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

765 a man dies leaving young wives without infants his funeral ceremonies
581 are hurried on. Tallensi do not believe that young widows without
infants will remain chaste for long out of a sense of duty or for fear of
834 mystical penalties. A man's widow, in short, remains his wife, sexually
bound to him, as long as his social personality continues to be recognized.
Death alone does not expunge a man's social personality. The manage-
ment of his property, his social roles, and all his rights and responsibilities,
continue to be exercised by proxy in his name after his death until his
[768] funeral ceremonies are finished; for it is by these ritual acts that his
social personality is expunged. His property then passes to his heir,
his social roles to his successor, and his widow is free to remarry.

The Husband's Relationship with his Affines

593 The sexual bond of husband and wife is also, as we have noticed, the
562 critical element that discriminates a woman's marital relationship with
her husband from her filial relationship with her father or with anyone
who takes over his social role. As we have mentioned before, the
economic duties and rights of a woman in her conjugal family are not
very different from those that she exercises in her natal family before
marriage or if she comes to live with the latter at any time. Her jural
status as a minor under her husband's or father-in-law's authority
corresponds to her jural status in her father's family. It is essentially
with respect to her reproductive capacity that her role and status as wife
and mother are sharply separated from her role and status as daughter
and sister.

This will be clearer if we look first at the general rules and conventions
of a son-in-law's relations with his father-in-law's family and lineage.

602 The term *deema* (pl. *deenam*), affine, correctly used applies to wife's
562 parent and daughter's husband, and to anyone identified with them in
a particular situation. It is the self-reciprocal term of address between
these relatives, as well as the term of reference for them. I have heard
it used as a special gesture of consideration and courtesy by a man to his
brother's wife, but this is not usual. For the relationship between
affines, in the Tale sense of this term, is not quite the same as that of a
woman with her husband's parents and siblings. A man's affines have
no authority over him. The tensions connected with common residence
are absent. There are no common economic, jural, or ritual interests
between affines.

602 As in all Tale social relations, differences of personality and the flexi-
606 bility of custom result in variations in the actual behaviour of affines to
one another that sometimes obscure the real nature of the relationship.
I have seen a man chaff his mother-in-law (*deempok*) in a way that would
be regarded as excessively familiar by the majority of natives. In a well-
established marriage one often finds great friendliness and mutual good-

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

In ritual activities the social equivalence of siblings is constantly apparent, and in its most flexible form. For example, in almost every one of the elaborate series of rites that make up funeral ceremonies certain duties fall on particular kin of the dead person. A typical instance is the cooking of 'sisters-in-law porridge (*pɔyakiis saɣabo*)', one of the inaugural rites of every funeral. Two 'wives' and a 'daughter' of the clan together cook porridge in a prescribed ritual fashion. Usually the rite is performed by daughters and wives of the inner lineage that is celebrating the funeral, but any daughter of the clan and any wife of the clan can serve. The rite ends with a 'sister's son (*ahɔŋ*)' pretending to whip the women who cook the porridge with a twig. As there is not always a true sister's son present, a member of the clan has to act instead. There is never any difficulty in finding somebody who is qualified to do so. By going back far enough almost anybody can trace a matrilateral link with his own clan and can therefore act as a 'sister's son' for the purpose of the rite. Thus at Saɣawuob's mother's funeral Latarəg acted as 'sister's son'. His father's mother's mother had been a daughter of the clan section to which Saɣawuob belongs and that made him a classificatory 'sister's son' for purposes of this rite. A double identification lies behind such assimilations of remote to near kin. There is the lateral identification of any daughter of the clan with any other daughter of the clan, living or dead; and there is the vertical identification of a person with any of his ancestors in certain situations.

A somewhat different illustration is the following. We have seen, in our earlier book,[1] how the genealogical equality ('but for the accident of birth') of women members of the lineage and clan with their brothers is recognized both in secular and in ritual custom. Among all the daughters of a lineage—from the minimal to the maximal span, as it emerges in a particular context—the oldest of them, the *pɔɣayabəlɔg-kpeŋ*, has special prestige. She stands for the genealogical equality of women and men in the lineage. She has a kind of honorary equality with the male head of the lineage. She has no authority in lineage affairs; but if she happens to be present when they are being discussed she may speak her mind freely and will be listened to with respect. In the case of the senior daughter of a medial or lesser lineage, she has the right to be informed in advance of every important ceremonial event in the lineage. If she attends, she is entitled to a special portion of the sacrificial meat usually allocated to the daughter—the backbone, upper ribs, and intestines. But there is a curious custom which shows her symbolic equivalence with her brother, the lineage head, best. She may never sleep under the same roof with him, even if he is her own full brother. If she did, one of them would die. There is a feeling that in the eyes of the ancestors the oldest male and oldest woman of a lineage are so nearly equivalent that the latter could easily replace the

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 52 and ch. ix.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

former. The taboo emphasizes the superiority of the male members in spite of genealogical equivalence. There is an obverse to this taboo. The token funeral performed for a woman by her father's people, after her real funeral at her husband's home, is made for a *pɔŋayabɔlŋ-kpɛŋ* not by her own father's heirs but by the head of the inner or medial or even maximal lineage, her status-brother, so to speak. Tallensi say she belongs to the whole lineage not to her paternal family.

To revert to the levirate, the fundamental rule is that a man's widow may be inherited only by a 'brother' or a 'grandson' in his own clan or a linked clan, or by a 'sister's son' in an unrelated clan. The two principles involved are those of the equivalence of siblings and of the equivalence of alternate generations. A 'sister's son's' leviratic rights go back to the notion that his 'mother' might have been a man and a 'brother' of the dead man. He is exercising the rights that might have been his 'mother's'; hence this, too, is a recognition of the equivalence of siblings. What is absolutely prohibited is to inherit the widow of a 'son' or a 'father'.

In theory, as we know, these rights extend to 'brothers', 'grandsons', and 'sisters' sons' in the widest connotation of these terms. Joint leviratic rights is one of the critical norms of clanship,[1] implying that all men of the clan are 'brothers'. In practice these rights are neither absolute, nor are they equal for all men who are ostensibly entitled to them. Various factors enter into the picture, but the most important are the widow's preferences and the genealogical distance between her dead husband and whoever is seeking her hand. The strongest efforts are made to prevent a widow of child-bearing age from remarrying out of the nuclear, or at most inner, lineage of her late husband. His full and half-brothers have the strongest claim to the widow. This is based not only on the argument of genealogical proximity but on what this implies. They have contributed by their labour to the bride-price that was paid for her, and if she marries a distant clansman of theirs they lose the returns on this that children represent; for a man marrying a distant clan-brother's widow need not, in theory, refund the bride-price the latter's nuclear lineage gave for her. Actually a refund of the bride-price is often demanded in such cases and usually paid to avoid ill-feeling between the two inner lineages concerned. In addition, full and half-brothers are the dead man's coheirs. They take possession of the patrimonial property he administered during his lifetime. They accept responsibility for his debts and assume the custody of his children. For all these acts the Tallensi use the concept *vaa* (to inherit or succeed to). So they say a man *vaa* (inherits) his late brother's land, livestock, and children; and it is just, therefore, that he should also inherit his privileges and rights, especially in the matter of his widow. As brothers of the same nuclear lineage are coheirs of their patrimonial

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 41.

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
FE11 Tallensi FE11

312 natives regard this water as unsuitable for their own consumption, but use it as drinking-water for fowls, for building purposes, and to wash in. There are no special rights of use attached to water-holes, but as a rule each water-hole serves a group of compounds within a radius of not more than 300 yards.

262 A proper meal, according to Tale values, must consist of cooked food; and two meals a day are considered to be necessary for the satisfaction of ordinary needs. When the granaries are full and the women are given grain liberally this standard can be reached, but not in the lean months.

596 The owner of the granary distributes grain periodically to all his
261 wives and those of the householders dependent upon him. He never
264 descends into the granary himself, but appoints a young man, preferably unmarried, to do so, lest the women complain of favouritism. Each woman receives the same measure regardless of her status or of the size of her family. Absolute equality is stressed. Even a young wife without a kitchen receives an equal share. The measure, a small basket or calabash, remains the same throughout the seasons, but the period for which the housewife must make it last varies. When grain is plentiful they receive the measure daily. They will cook food at noon and at sunset, and some will make enough to suffice for the next morning's breakfast. In times of scarcity the same amount of grain has to last two or three days. It is left now to the individual household and family to supplement its food resources as best it can. If a noon meal is cooked at this time, it is made of grain obtained from the ancillary sources we have previously described. Every woman carefully considers her supply, limiting the number of meals so that the family may be assured of the evening meal as regularly as possible.

562 However, shortage of food is not alone responsible for the uncer-
264 tainty of meals. Woman is the pivot of the whole domestic life. She
252 carries on her duties throughout pregnancy till the moment of labour approaches, and again as soon as her period of confinement is over (three or four days). But she is also absolute mistress of her home, and when she refuses to cook her husband cannot compel her to. Nevertheless, a woman will miss cooking a meal only for very good reasons, e.g. when she has been working in the fields late, sowing or harvesting, or beating the floors of the compound, or has been away

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
FE11 Tallensi FE11

for firewood. A woman with a small child never omits to cook a little for it, whatever the circumstances. The cooking routine also becomes upset under the stress of seasonal activities. When a whole family goes to work at a bush farm or to a fishing expedition, some groundnuts or dry guinea-corn is taken along to chew, and no cooking will be done until evening.

Each woman is responsible for the provision of meals for her husband and family. In certain situations co-wives co-operate for the common good. Thus when building operations take place, or a man has hired or 'invited' labour the co-wives cook in turn to provide food for the men. On such occasions the owner of the granary allots a special share of grain for the labourers' porridge to the woman whose turn it is to cook for them.

Mutual assistance between co-wives occurs only when a woman is confined or ill. Then her co-wife (a wife of her husband or his brother) cooks for her and her family. The confined woman provides her own produce and firewood and the cooking is done in her kitchen. This is the duty and prerogative of co-wives. Only as a last resort would the husband's mother or sister cook for her in those circumstances. When a young wife shares her mother-in-law's quarters she does all the household tasks; but when she shares those of a senior wife, they assist each other and cook in turn.

The standard meal of the Tallensi is *sayab ni ziet*, meal porridge and soup. Porridge is prepared of flour and, depending upon the season and what a man has in his grain-store, it is made of early millet, guinea-corn or late millet. Sometimes also maize (generally purchased) or cow-peas or rice is used. When root crops are in season they are cooked instead of porridge, but not because porridge becomes monotonous to the Tallensi, or they wish to vary the diet (see Appendix), it is done in order to make the grain last longer. 'Porridge is food, it makes you strong', and there can never be too much of it is the Tale point of view. 'But if you eat too much of the other things they spoil your belly'.[1]

The preparation of porridge is very simple. Flour is not preserved

[1] A Tale friend enquired what kind of food he would be given in our country, and when told that he would eat meat, fish, bread, and eggs, he exclaimed, 'What, no porridge? I call that starvation.'

6: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1937 FE11 Tallensi FE11

226 at a leisurely pace, stopping every now and then to pluck bunches of soft, heavy leaves. These they stick into their waistbands, in front and behind, as a substitute for the perineal belt which they remove to prevent its being damaged in the water. The throng presses gaily on, joking, laughing, and conversing.

226 515 562 834 Several hours before the fishing is due to begin the well-wooded banks of the river swarm with a jostling multitude. The small and very shallow pools scattered in the sandy reaches between the large fishing pools are filled with bathers. The segregation of the sexes, inchoate at the time of the approach to the pool, now becomes more explicit. The women tend to congregate apart from the men though communication between the two groups is perfectly free and frequent, and they bathe in different pools from the men. In explanation men declare with a smirk, "so that we can't see each other's sexual parts," but the close proximity to each other of the two groups of bathers and their unabashed bearing contradicts this allegation. Indeed nakedness is never a source of shame, though modesty requires a woman who has had children to cover the genitalia. But the men thus hint obscurely at the real explanation: the sexual dichotomy which runs through the whole culture, expressing itself in the division of labour and as now in a spontaneous but not rigid social segregation at certain times. It will be seen later that this principle emerges graphically in the actual technique of fishing. In the case of one pool, fished on two successive days, it took the extreme form of barring women altogether on the first day, on ritual grounds.

226 578 Besides the division in terms of sex, a distribution in accordance with political cleavages can be observed. Broadly speaking, the tribe is divided into two large political aggregates, the *Namoos* and the *Tallis* (the "real Tallensi"), each comprising several settlements or "lands" (*ten*, pl. *tes*). When the number of people is large, as in the first expedition of the season, each settlement occupies its own traditional place by the river, *Namoos* on one bank, *Tallis* on the other, more or less. In the small expeditions the groups merge more. Again there is nothing rigid about this political segregation. Bonds of kinship and of marriage unite every individual of the one group to the other group; but the disposition of the contingents nevertheless expresses a traditional though latent opposition between the two groups which requires little provocation to flare up.

461 322 While some bathe and others lounge about, conversing with friends, or the young girls flirt with the young men, many employ themselves usefully. Some men cut thick withes to insert into their fishing nets, others cut hoe shafts or axe shafts, shaping them roughly, to carry them home for finishing. Since the agricultural season is just beginning there is a ready sale for these articles. Some hack down saplings for rafters, some strip lengths of bark from the *bayana* trees, if any are about, for making the rough rope used in thatching, while others search for trees and shrubs used as household medicines, and many women begin to collect bundles of firewood to take back with them. The geographical setting of the fishing expedition thus creates a subsidiary economic situation which ensures that the day is not wasted, even if no fish are caught.